



# Distorted Reflections

A Collection of Juvenilia

Jeffrey Side

With artwork by Daniela Voicu

*Argotist Ebooks*

Cover image by Rachel Lisi

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# Distorted Reflections

## Goldenrod

I watched you gather goldenrod in the fields.  
I watched you swimming in the forest.  
And I watched you keeping your hands  
upon your knees.

You breathe like a scientist. And your breath  
becomes the count of dreams. You smell  
as sweet as the second-hand books you  
throw away.

And the caverns in the earth are not singing.  
And I cannot walk around the laboratory.  
And I cannot rest my fingers.  
And I cannot stay in when the sun is out.

I used to think you were a gift to the  
experimenters. I used to think you were a gift  
to the men fighting for their home.

Or the men who cry on the heaths and moors.  
Or the men who fall in the underground.  
Or the men who wait for us when the clock stops.

I watched you gather goldenrod in the fields.  
The sun was escaping from your hair  
and your feet were deep in the wet grass.

And your arms were filled with goldenrod.

## She Left Without Delay

I mark the time when I fly high.  
I'll be landing very soon.  
I cannot relocate my genes.  
I cannot fix the balloon.

When suspicion is in your heart  
the innocent are hurt too.  
My ambitions are paved with  
thoughts of a nature aimed at you.

I'll take you off that man one day.  
I'll take you at your word.  
I'll take you very far away  
to somewhere you preferred.

I need you in this room dead soon.  
I need you in the air.  
I need you on the moon in June.  
I need you everywhere.

I knew someone who looked like you.  
She haunts me to this day.  
She was a screamer too.  
She left without delay.

## Juliet

Wearing the Earth  
like a robe,  
I flew across the world  
today.

I could see  
the buried memories  
hidden  
in the trees,

and I could find  
no one  
to hurt  
the two of us outside of  
you and me.

I knew you when  
you were nothing.

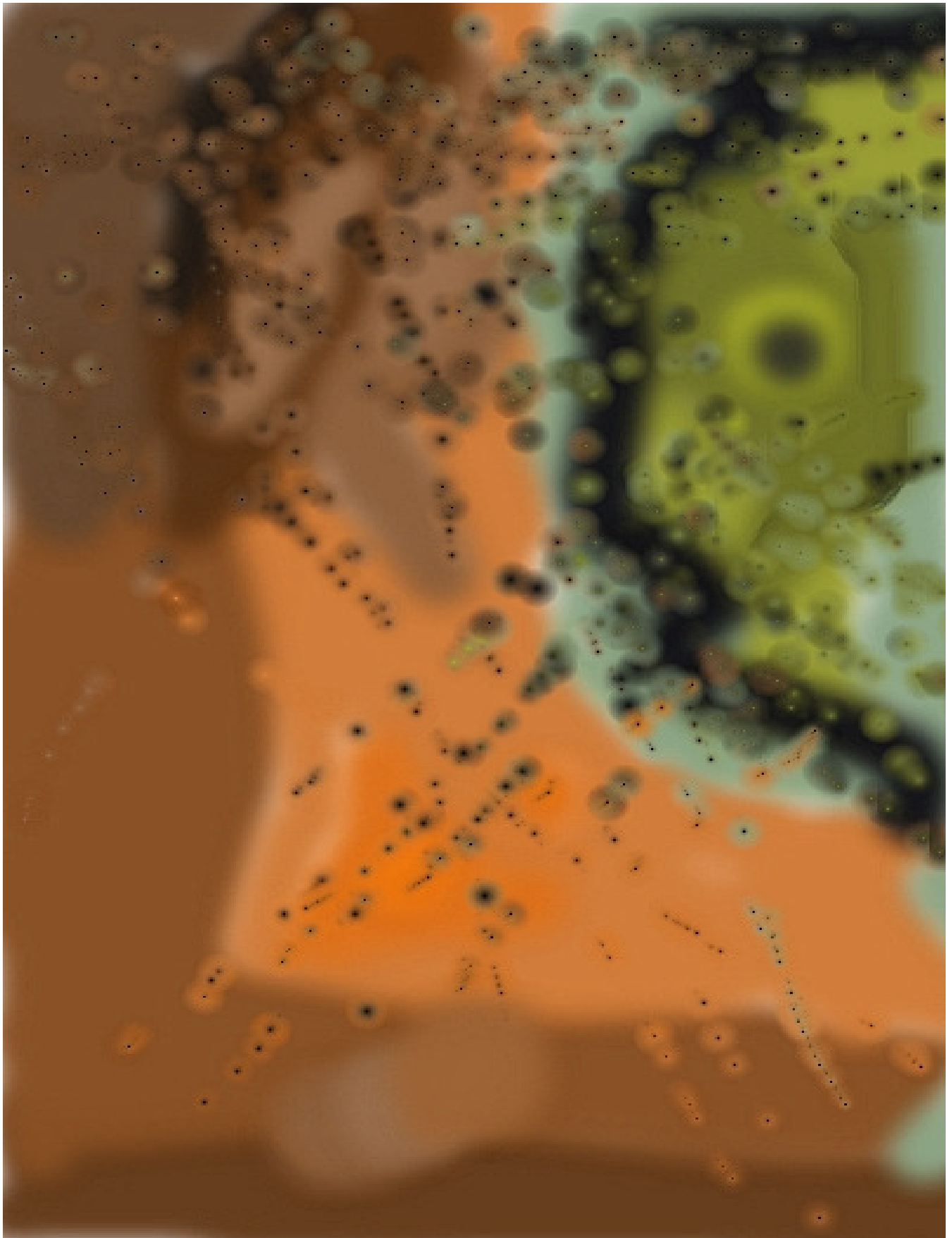
And then  
I knew you when you were  
something.

And then I met you  
as you were  
passed  
from friend to friend.

Each one leaving you  
alone  
to weep in the  
desert.

You had that look  
in your eyes  
that said tonight was  
the day.

And I wish you had known me  
when the sun was bright.





## Greenheys Road

The vessels of love crowd in.  
Their traumas hidden  
among the reeds.

No love is lost or given to them  
as they clutter the minds  
of thieves.

Strong, sober and drunk  
I come to you.  
My weakness revealed  
in my glee.

And book-like I pray on  
your need  
to comfort – sometimes.

Now there is light.  
And now there is dark.

And that is the way that you  
can pay  
the charity you give  
to men like me.

## B Block

You keep your  
services for them.  
You keep  
the church they know.

And they make  
donations regularly  
with  
one hand on your head.

They lean you  
down towards  
the cup.  
You sip the overflow.

You lick your lips  
and move your fingers  
far apart.

You have no town  
inside you  
now.  
You have no  
travellers there.

Did you send them  
home again?  
Or did they leave for  
better fare?

I was the one who  
landed upon  
your  
lessened wing.

You had me  
and then you had  
your king.

I came to you a  
broken ring. I danced  
inside

your mouth.  
I gave you all my

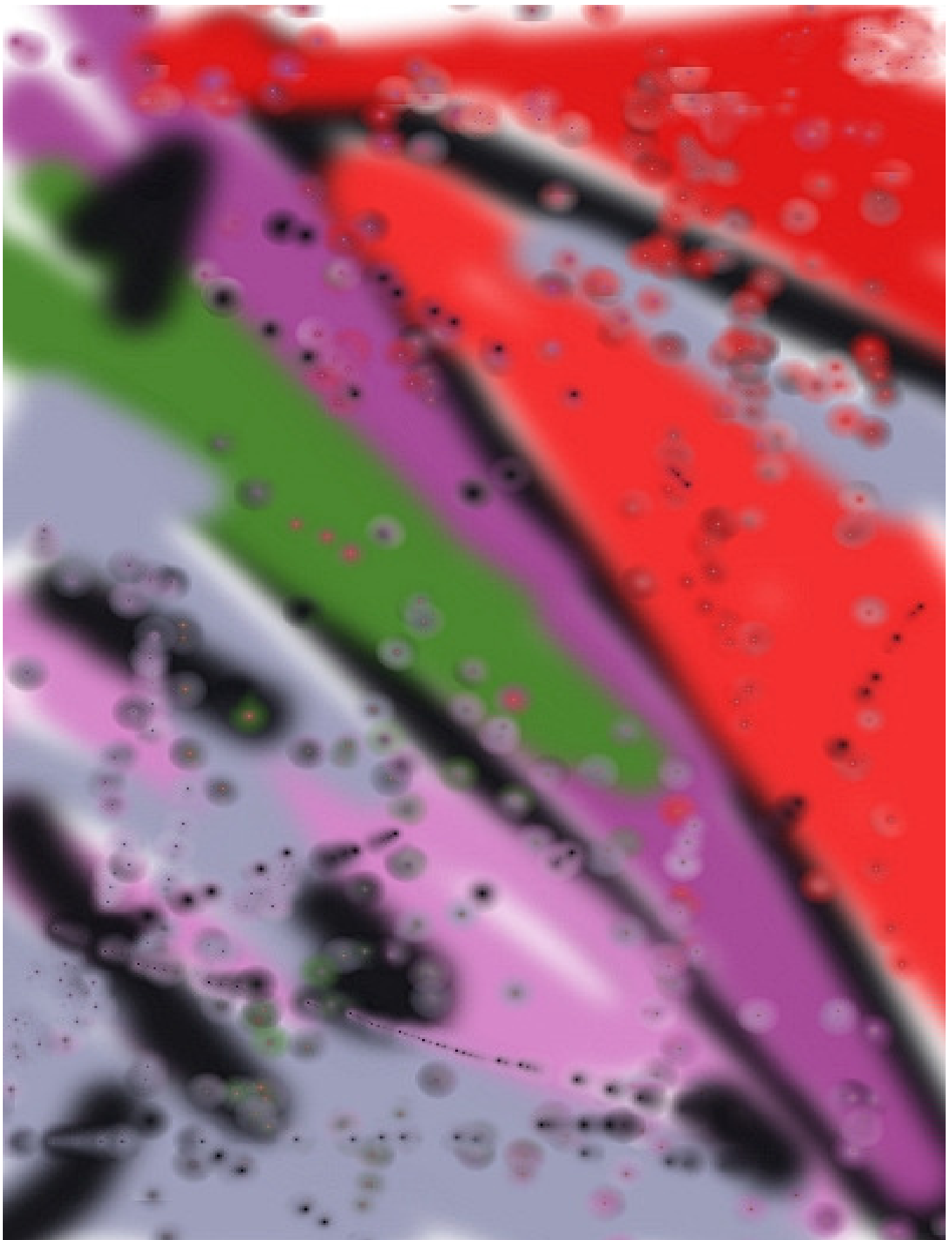
money  
before you let me  
in.

I couldn't be a

saviour now. I couldn't  
be a queen.  
I keep looking around  
for things  
I haven't seen.

I seldom wandered in  
your night.  
I seldom took  
the fall.

Now deep inside  
I know  
there's no  
one else to call.



## Voices in the Light

Sometimes voices  
in the light  
will call me back to  
them.

Back out of this  
place where  
I have spoken  
from.

And then I will turn  
my  
back on you,  
and on  
the storm-bled sea.

And even  
on the sleeping faces  
that will  
never  
wake for me.

I will find myself  
expanded  
out of limitations  
plight.

And no  
earthly cause  
or battle  
will keep  
me in this fight.

And what will  
seem like  
nothingness to  
those  
that have remained,

to me will seem like  
childhood  
when in

the time of May.

## She Was as Tall as the Eiffel

On the journey back,  
riding on a lonely track  
beat-up.

My memories of you  
are packed deep inside  
a sack.

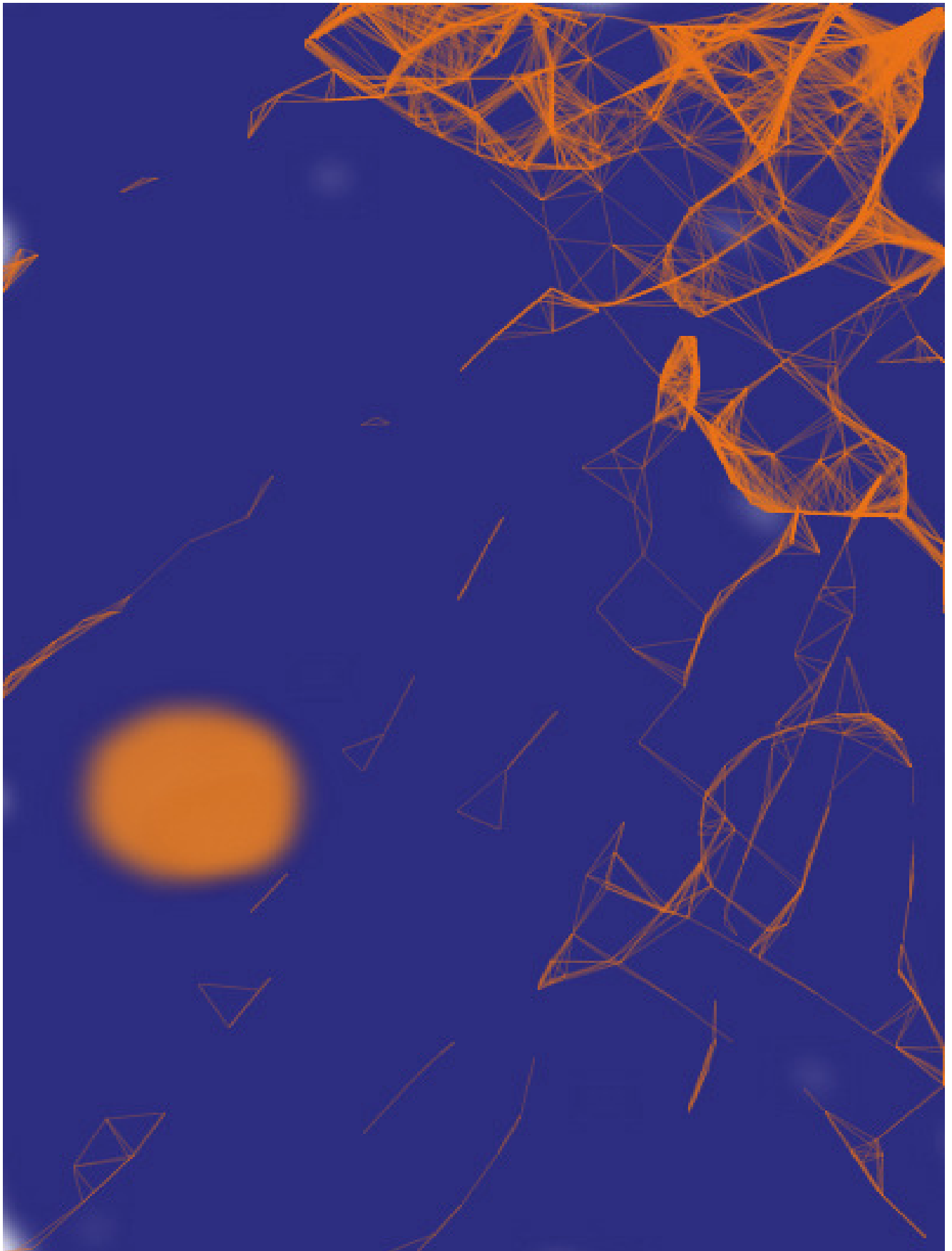
I never knew your mouth  
or your soil. I never  
knew your fingering.

Begging  
lonely men you begged  
me, and I gave you  
something then.

I can't remember  
which or what  
or when.  
Or if it was  
something I once sent.

But is it time?  
You left them  
abruptly.

And is it true about  
the merchant?





## Can't Talk Anymore in the Old Way

On the days I'd go to visit.  
I knew  
she would be free.

In the mornings she'd do  
the Sun Salute,  
and in  
the evenings  
make peppermint tea.

I first caught sight of  
her in the designer sea,  
when she was captive in her  
swim suit  
and the water beckoned me.

On crowded nights she'd  
calm me down  
with all I expected and without  
any sound.

And on days  
like this, when the coast is clear,  
I'd travel  
up to see her there.  
Then back at  
dawn to my place, here,  
by morning I would repair.

On days like this I'd visit her,  
when her lover was  
elsewhere.

And into the darkness I would slip,  
until she ceased  
to care.

## When You Were Tempered with Delight

When you were tempered  
with delight  
your virtues were taken  
down and forests  
that you passed through  
were not finite.

When you were  
tempered with delight  
you kept the  
saddest oceans,  
you kept  
the proudest streams.  
And wild pens  
would  
not strain your sight.

When you were tempered  
with delight  
you carried sand  
upon your necklace and  
cream upon your  
lips. And you  
never made the journey  
through the park.

When you were  
tempered with delight  
you were  
consumed by bikers in the  
light and  
nurses in the dark.  
And taut strings  
pulled  
on you forever.

When you were tempered  
by delight  
strong bars were  
held around your  
fortress  
and strong men

could never kiss the  
wound you  
would always hide.

## The Seeds Within Me

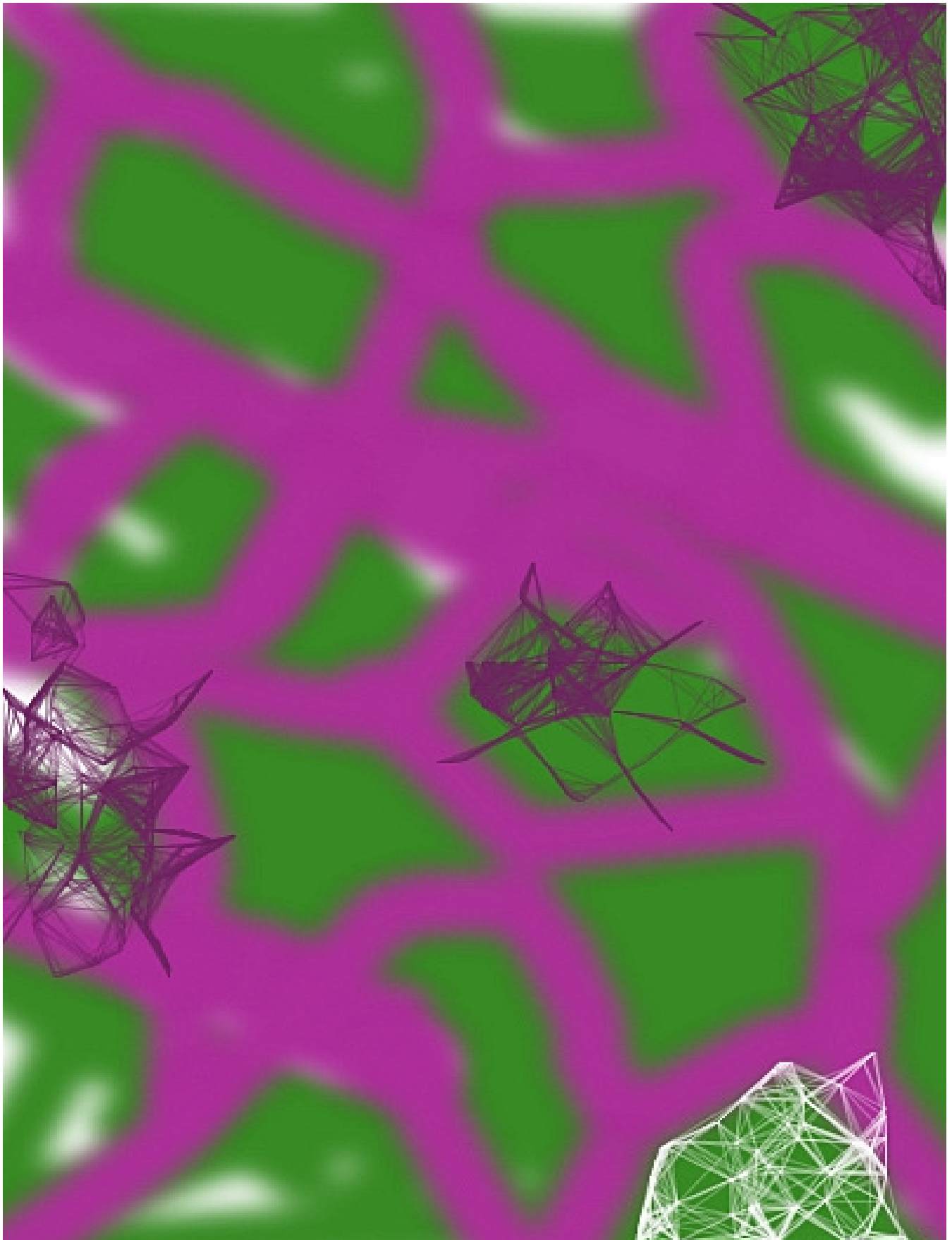
The seeds within me  
formed my shape

and sorrows  
long before I knew them.

Like some inevitable  
punishment I'm  
blind to  
they cause predictions  
to be true  
and disasters to be  
just right.

They stopped me  
climbing in the fields  
and falling on the  
slopes that  
framed the lake.

They made me like a  
fallen tree whose  
rings can be counted  
and whose memory  
can be read.



## Books That Soothe the Dying

The humming sounds  
like the  
primrose singing.

New across your gaze  
whole pillars torment you  
between journeys.

Everywhere longings  
that occurred gradually  
finally overflow you.

And intently felt irony  
is like bread  
to the sentence of  
imagination.

Also, sitting appears  
doubtful  
even while the wakeful  
man  
goes straight in  
the parlour.

## Sketches of the Small Town

Over provided to the  
small point. Stop or water.

The highest touches are by the  
snowdrifts.

But towards the waters  
all sides are to the sea.

Moist flight south,  
and valleys, more  
finally,  
become lovelier.

World looking,  
listening.

Gone, distant happiness.

## When the Air Was Still

We were together and she fell.  
Her name I could never spell.

When morning came the trees then shaded  
a sunlit spot in forest gladed.

I came upon a table polished.  
God is love but who is nourished?

A single anchor hanging down.  
A ritual without a sound.

The rivers of youth and death  
are now awake where they once crept.

I tamed a serpent in my hand  
and buried a woman in the sand.

Prester John has come again,  
although he never left us then.

Animals now cough at night.  
And clarity seems recondite.

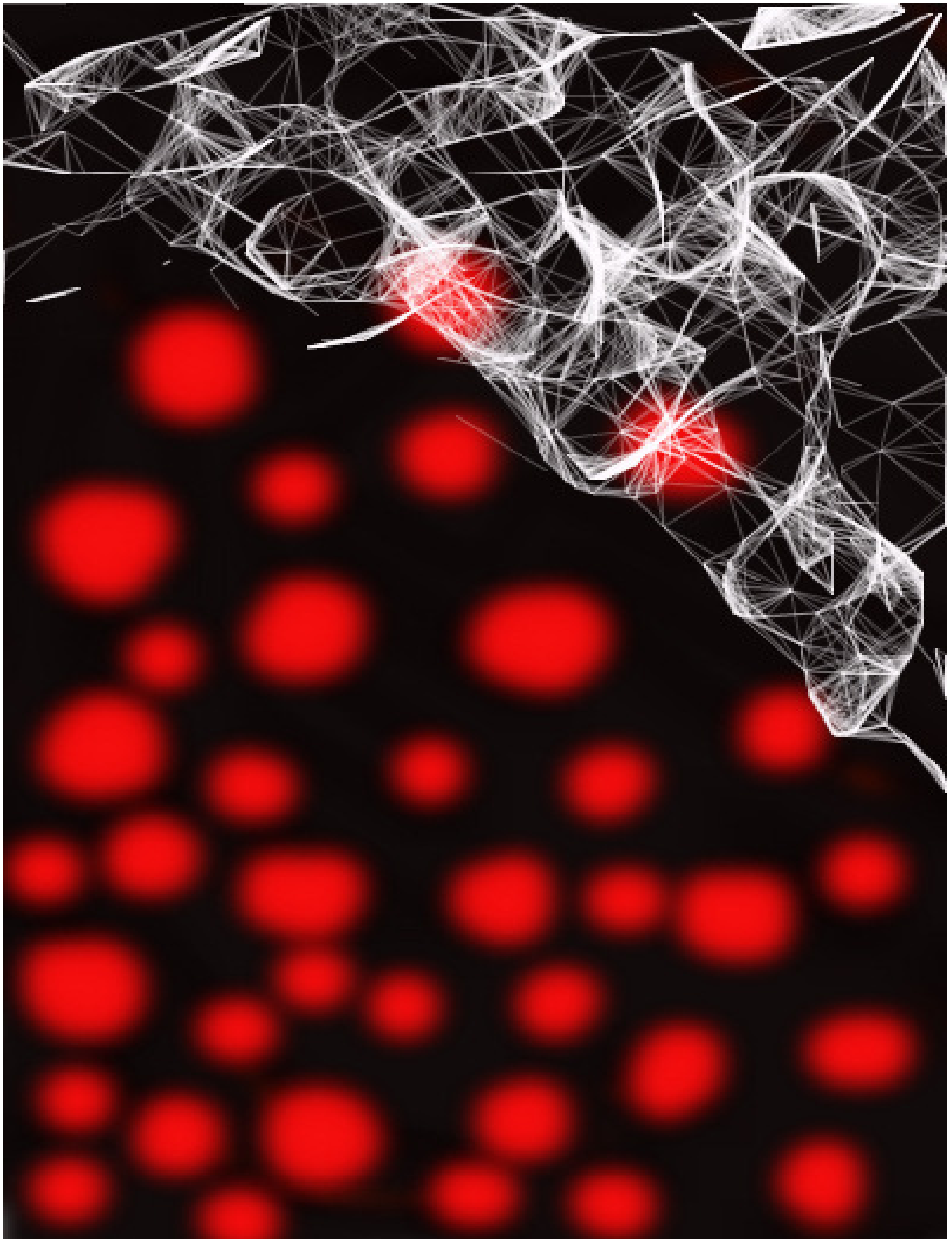
The clouds made shadows on her chest  
as she prepared for final rest.

I was born to forget my death.  
I was born to count my breath.

A paper bag lived in the breeze  
while my love died of a new disease.

I mourned her when the air was still,  
and lay on her grave in the morning chill.





## What Do the French Quote?

She loved to sit and listen  
to me sing as she held me  
against her rings while  
the worm destroyed her.

The caves to the east can  
be followed by the sun.

And she travelled there  
among the strangers  
from the sea.

Like the bubble-islands in  
my bath she never stayed the  
same. And when she  
woke she saw no one.

She kept me warm with company.  
And we would  
whisper for hours about the  
books she'd bought.

Then I would watch her  
automatic hand land and turn  
the pages of some thin volume  
asking what the  
French would quote.

She asked about the river,  
and whether 'twas true  
that glass never smashed there.

I said it was so when I left.

## Foolishness on a Windy Night

I would find a room and sit  
looking at the back of my eyelids  
for many hours.

But no blindness could be found there.  
No corners could be turned.  
And no chairs heard.

We went fleeing in the forest  
between the trees that were dead  
and the counted skeletons  
that had turned red.

There was no one about to tell  
us to go so we stayed  
and smelt the smoke of wood-fire shade  
and pre-Raphaelite heat.

The shade then began to get light  
and I acted like a foolish man.

We married on a windy night when the  
cathedral sign was still on.

## On Hot Summer Nights

I declared my love to her  
and she turned herself away.  
But I will surely offer it  
again to her someday.

She lived on her own  
near to where I was born.  
And though I never told her  
to her I was sworn.

On hot summer nights  
when trapped in my flat  
I'd wander out to see her  
wherever it was that she sat.

But she was with another  
who went there for to hide.  
And many distances he had travelled  
to lay his baggage at her side.

## If I Hide the Stars at Night

O Joy, you're really not this mad.  
You've tasted everything I've ever had.  
I would wander in your night  
if you'd give me back my right  
to make you see that you just play games  
with yourself while you wait to claim the dust.  
And you speak as though  
you've got every detail sussed.  
And reading all the books you sent to me,  
I could never be this free.  
If I'm gone where would your mind be?

O Joy, you know that you are wrong.  
I don't have to be the one that's gone.  
If I hide the stars at night  
will you give up on your fight?  
And we'll pretend that we share this roof,  
these walls, this table and that chair.  
I could be someone else for you  
if you really must compare.  
And I'd see the old cathedral fly.  
And the mountains passing by.  
And your nose turned up towards the sky.

## Livingston Drive

Oh my dearest darling  
I have done you no wrong.  
Like that time in the morning  
I fell in love with you.  
Your father was a good man.  
He loved me like a son.  
And now you are absent evermore.

What have you done to me  
with your words that are now gone?  
I loved you like a saviour  
in this world you can't forsake.  
My lover of the starry eyes,  
I loved you long ago.  
And now you are absent evermore.

I only came upon your arms  
when I called that afternoon.  
And I saw a woman in the forest  
who was calling out to you.  
Her picture was like the one  
you showed me hidden in your room.  
And now you are absent evermore.

## Jeffrey Side

Jeffrey Side has had poetry published widely in both print and online; and has reviewed poetry for *Jacket*, *Eyewear*, *The Colorado Review*, *New Hope International*, *Stride*, *Acumen* and *Shearsman*.

From 1996 to 2000 he was the deputy editor of *The Argotist* magazine, and is currently the editor of the online successor of this, The Argotist Online, which has an ebook publishing arm called Argotist Ebooks.

His book publications include, *Carrier of the Seed*, *Slimvol*, *Cyclones in High Northern Latitudes* (with Jake Berry) and *Outside Voices: An Email Correspondence* (with Jake Berry).

## Daniela Voicu

Daniela Voicu is a Romanian poet, novelist and painter. Her poems have been published in *Cuget Liber*, *Agero Stuttgart*, *New York Magazine*, *Maintenant 7*, *Poetic Diversity*, *Pirene's Fountain*, *Curentul International*, *Revista Luceafarul*, *Pagini Romanesti* in *Noua Zeelanda* and *Pheonix Mission*. In various anthologies, including *Tears of Ink*, *The Poetry of War and Peace*, *Words on the Winds of Change*, *Just a Dream* and *Reflections on a Blue Planet*. And her poetry collections include, *Poems of Angels* (2006), *Blue in Vitro* (2012), *Surfing Silence* (2012), *Windows without Dreams* (ebook 2012) and *Sky Hands* (2012).

In 2009, she founded the international journal of culture and literature, *Cuib Nest Nido*; and in 2011 she founded the international poetry festival of music and contemporary art, *The Art to Be Human*.